lesson

working together digitally

InCtrl

about this lesson

Working Together Digitally is part of **InCtrl**, an engaging collection of hands-on lessons covering seven key **digital citizenship** topics. These free lessons, for grades 4–8, empower students to be smart, safe and effective participants in a digital world. Get **InCtrl** at **www.ciconline.org/InCtrl**.

LESSON SUMMARY

The digital world and its tools offer great possibilities to connect and collaborate with others. In this lesson, students will apply prior knowledge and skills to collaborate digitally and model positive attributes of an effective digital citizen. They will discover how to manage and improve their communication skills and learn to make the most of their connections. Combining their creativity, students will work together to design and contribute to a collaborative learning project in an online community using digital tools of their own choosing.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will…

- Identify and evaluate different tools used to communicate and connect digitally
- Describe and demonstrate the appropriate use of a variety of digital technologies to conduct various tasks and solve problems
- Participate and communicate effectively and respectfully with others
- Create and contribute to an original collaborative project using digital media in an online community

TEACHER TIP!
This lesson is designed to work for 4th-8th grade students and be adaptable to varying abilities. Activities build upon one another and increase in depth and complexity as the lesson progresses.

BACKGROUND

In preparation for the lesson, watch the following videos:

Working Together Digitally/ Teacher Video [3 minutes]
Digital interactions are routine in the 21st century and have changed the way we communicate. This video explores some of the opportunities and challenges that may arise for you and your students in a digital collaboration.

Working Together Digitally/ Student Video [3 minutes]
Meet Aidan. He's working on a digital research project with students from other schools. After a great start, problems begin to surface. This video follows Aidan's digital collaboration progress, and provides an opportunity for your students to analyze his group's work and discuss different approaches they may have taken.

LESSON LINKS

Check out these lessons to explore these topics in-depth:

Living in a Digital World (Digital Citizenship)

Your Digital Footprint: Leaving a Mark (Privacy)

In-Credibly Informed (Information Literacy)

TOPIC:
DIGITAL COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION

TIME REQUIRED

Two 3-minute videos,
Two 40-minute sessions*,
15 minute reflection

*Projects in Activity 2 will vary in length

SUPPLIES*

- Process Journals
- Computers/Tablets
- Internet Access
- Projector/Interactive whiteboard

*Lesson activities can be adapted for use without supplies

PREPARATION

- **Watch:**
  Working Together Digitally/Teacher Video (for you)
  Working Together Digitally/Student Video (for the class)

STANDARDS*

- **Common Core English Language Arts**
- **American Association of School Librarians**
- **National Education Technology Standards (NETS), ISTE**
- **Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21)**

*See page 5 for complete list of standards strands met.

DIGITAL TOOLS TO EXPLORE

scribblar.com
simple, effective online collaboration

essential questions

What are the different ways we can collaborate and work together digitally? Why is it important to know how to work together digitally? What are the benefits and challenges?

• WORDS TO KNOW • • •

Crowd-Source
short for Crowd Outsourcing: a practice of calling upon the public or a broad community to solve a problem either through collaboration or a challenge or a game. The practice of crowdsourcing content is growing in popularity. It has been used by corporations to improve or build a new product, by scientists to combine research, by the medical field to find cures for illnesses, to name a few examples.

VOIP
short for Voice Over Internet Protocol; a technology that allows for voice or multimedia communication over the Internet (such as **Skype**).

WHY WE CONNECT

Encourage your students to think about the various reasons people connect, both offline and online – to other people and to information – in the following categories:

- Social interaction (making plans, sharing event photos)
- Entertainment (watching videos, playing games with people in other locations)
- Educational projects (homework, scheduling/communication, creating media, sharing video)
- Research (college searching, finding local information)
- Work (employee communications, job-related research)

WHO WE CONNECT WITH

Who we connect with determines how we communicate, and what tools or devices we use. Encourage students to think about the various people they connect with and the different rules and expectations for communicating with each of them.

- Family
- Friends
- Teachers and Administrators
- Professional Contacts
- Strangers

introduction [15 minutes]

Brainstorm! Start a class discussion by asking students: ***With whom do people connect? What are the different reasons people connect with one another?*** Invite students to share their ideas and create list or mind maps called **"Who We Connect With"** and **"Why We Connect"** (see sidebars) using your interactive whiteboard to map or an online collaborative brainstorming tool, such as **Mindmeister**, **Scribblar**, or **Evernote**. Students may focus on social aspects, so encourage them to broaden their thinking to consider collaborative uses.

Next, ask: ***How do you communicate and connect with other people, and with the world? How do you like to connect with information?*** Prompt students to think about the tools they use to connect with different audiences during the course of any given day or week, starting with people they know, such as friends, and family. Do they like to meet in person, call, chat, text, send notes? Create a new list called **"How We Connect"** with student answers. (Guide them to include at least one digital communication tool from each category in the sidebar.)

activity 1 [25 minutes]

Compare & Analyze. Ask: ***What are the best ways we can collaborate and work together digitally?*** Divide the class into groups of 4-5 students. Assign each group a different purpose from the class **"Why We Connect"** list, or from one of the following scenarios. Ask students to first break down the tasks required to do each project, step-by-step. ***What do you need to do first? Last?***

- **Research and work on a group project for school**
- **Explore spring break activities for your family**
- **Plan a trip**
- **Learn about local volunteer opportunities**
- **Sharing photos from a private birthday party**
- **Notify someone of a last minute schedule change**

TEACHER TIPS!

Digital tools don't just make your life easier; they can also make your role as a teacher or your communication and collaboration with students, parents, and the community more effective.

Use these tools to teach students outside of the classroom, assign homework, guide research, share student work, provide feedback, and promote creative thinking and inspiration. In addition to enhancing the education experience, they will provide valuable practice and experience for students on how to operate and collaborate successfully in the digital space.

Evaluate & Discuss. Invite groups to discuss which tools they feel are most effective for their scenarios and explain why. Ask them to share why they think some tools might be less effective, or less appropriate. Ask: ***What are some challenges, barriers or misunderstandings that can occur with some tools?*** (See **"How We Connect"** and **"Extensions"** sidebars for idea starters.)

Organize. Have students work together to create a connectivity mind-map or infographic to organize and rate the digital tools in their category from "most effective" to "least effective" for different communication purposes.

activity 2 [40-minute planning. Project time will vary]

Apply & Create. Assign or let students choose from one of the collaborative project options below; or, adapt a project you are already planning to do by integrating the digital tools/interactions suggested at right. Projects suggested here can also be modified to suit your existing curriculum, class needs, or skills levels, and can be done over an extended period of time.

Use Digital Tools. Once students have chosen/been assigned a project, have groups plan their project, list the tasks required to accomplish their goal, identify and assign roles and responsibilities, and then select the most effective digital tools for their purposes. Challenge students to consider how their projects can enable them to connect with people in a different location and/or at a different time (who are not online when they are). For each project, ask students to consider the following questions: ***What is your goal or what problem do you want to solve? What information do you want to share? Who do you want to connect with? How can you work together effectively to accomplish your goal? What is your role?***

HOW WE CONNECT

The following digital communication tools can foster collaboration and expand the reach of your students' ideas, communication, and projects beyond classroom walls. What other collaborative technologies can your students add to this list?

- Email
- Text
- Phone calls (mobile, landline, VOIP)
- Chat
- Blogs
- Wikis or websites
- Social media (**Twitter**, **Facebook**, **Instagram**, **Flickr**)
- E-conference (**GoToMeeting**, **Google Hangout**, **Skype**, **Facetime**)
- Video (**YouTube**, **Vimeo**, **Ted Talks**)
- Shared documents/virtual workspaces (**Google Docs**, **Mindmeister**, **Twiddla**, **Scribblar**, **Evernote**)

COLLABORATIVE PROJECT OPTIONS

Peer Teach: Have students peer teach a skill or share knowledge on a topic of their interest to a partner in another location. They should choose a tool they feel will work best for what they want to teach within the time frame given. (For example, they can teach someone how to juggle, play an instrument, or make a recipe.)

Meet Our Community: Have students identify and document landmarks in their community using various media (such as photos, web links) and add these to a collaborative online map. Students can invite others (students, parents, community members) to contribute to it. They can then share it with students in another country to learn about each other as a cultural exchange. (For example, they could create an informational virtual walking tour around their city.)

Publish & Share: Students will build a joint wiki, blog, or website for their class to publish their research on a topic, share what they are learning, or create a portfolio to showcase what they have accomplished over the school year. They should think beyond the aesthetic elements of their site and consider the

TEACHER TIPS!

There may be digital technologies or tools you and your students will want to learn to use before starting their projects. If so, set aside time for students to do so.

Don't have all the digital tools? Projects can be modified to work without them, and still prompt and facilitate important discussions on collaboration and digital communication.

information they want to share, how to organize it, and decide how each group member can participate and contribute.

Care & Connect: Ask students to think about a cause they care about or an interest or topic they have in common. Using an online publishing tool of their choice (blog, wiki, social media, website), they will create an online community or club with information about the topic or cause. Have them consider how much access they want to allow and how to invite people from other communities to contribute. (For example: a movie or book club, peer tutoring club, anti-bullying support club, recycling club.)

Virtual Art Performance: Students collaborate online to practice and perform a virtual play, song, or art performance using video-recording, or online conferencing technology. (For example, students can create a virtual choir or one-act play inviting students from different locations to participate, or combine pieces of video or music collected/generated by different participants. Search for virtual symphony or choir performances on YouTube for powerful examples.)

STEP IT UP!

To maximize your students' opportunity to exercise their digital collaboration and communication skills, modify projects to connect and work with students in another class, school, state or country. Use communication technology such as **Skype** and collaborative tools such as **Google Docs** or wikis to facilitate the interaction.

reflection [15 minutes]

Invite students to reflect on their projects by writing in their process journals. Then, invite them to share and discuss their thoughts with the rest of the class. Ask: ***What makes communication and collaboration difficult? What makes it a part of digital citizenship? How can a digital citizen collaborate with others who are separated by time and space?*** Then, reflect their experiences with the specific activities: ***What tools made it easy or effective to collaborate? What challenges did we run into? How does technology help us connect? What problems did we solve collaboratively and how?***

• EXTENSIONS • • •

Have students discuss appropriate communication tools and tone for different audiences. Ask them to consider the differences between face-to-face and virtual communication. How can you communicate clearly with different audiences digitally?

OMG, TMI. Communication Bloopers! It's happened to all of us. Our phone auto-corrects a text to change its meaning … or we hit "reply-all" when we just meant to respond to one person … or we post something as "public" instead of "private" on social media. Have students discuss different scenarios and how they can impact an individual and their digital footprint. What strategies can they use to avoid these situations?

Emote-icons. Have students think about the challenges of certain communication tools and consider what differences there are between face-to-face and online communication. How can one express tone and emotion via digital communication? (i.e. emoticons, font styles and treatments, ALL CAPS, underline, **bold**, *italics*, etc.) When are certain communication styles appropriate or not appropriate?

Class Library. Together with your students, build a collaborative resource document to share useful resources and tools for different topics and projects. For example, start a collaborative Google document or a class Pinterest page with different board categories (such as "inspiration," "collaborative tools," "in the news," "videos," etc.). Assign students to contribute something new each week and talk about how they can use it collaboratively.

Future Thinkers Challenge! Put students to the test to create their own crowdsourcing project. Ask: What problem do you think can be solved by crowdsourcing/collaborative technologies?

education standards met in lesson

COMMON CORE ELA STANDARDS

Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge
Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration; Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas
Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS

Standard 1: 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.4, 1.1.5, 1.1.6, 1.1.7, 1.1.8, 1.1.9, 1.2.3, 1.2.6, 1.3.2, 1.3.3, 1.3.4, 1.3.5, 1.4.1, 1.4.2, 1.4.3, 1.4.4
Standard 2: 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.1.4, 2.1.5, 2.1.6, 2.2.4, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.4.1, 2.4.3, 2.4.4
Standard 3: 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.3, 3.1.4, 3.1.5, 3.1.6, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.2.3, 3.3.2, 3.3.3, 3.3.4, 3.3.5, 3.4.2, 3.4.3
Standard 4: 4.1.1.4, 4.1.5, 4.1.7, 4.1.8, 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.2.3, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.4, 4.4.4

NATIONAL EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY STANDARDS (NETS), ISTE

1. **Creativity and Innovation:** a, b, c, d
2. **Communication and Collaboration:** a, b, c, d
3. **Research and Information Fluency:** b, c, d
4. **Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making:** a, b, c, d
5. **Digital Citizenship:** b, d
6. **Technology Operations and Concepts:** a, b, c, d

PARTNERSHIP FOR 21ST CENTURY SKILLS (P21)

Learning and Innovation Skills:
1. Creativity and Innovation
2. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
3. Communication and Collaboration

Information, Media and Technology Skills
1. Information Literacy
2. ICT Literacy